

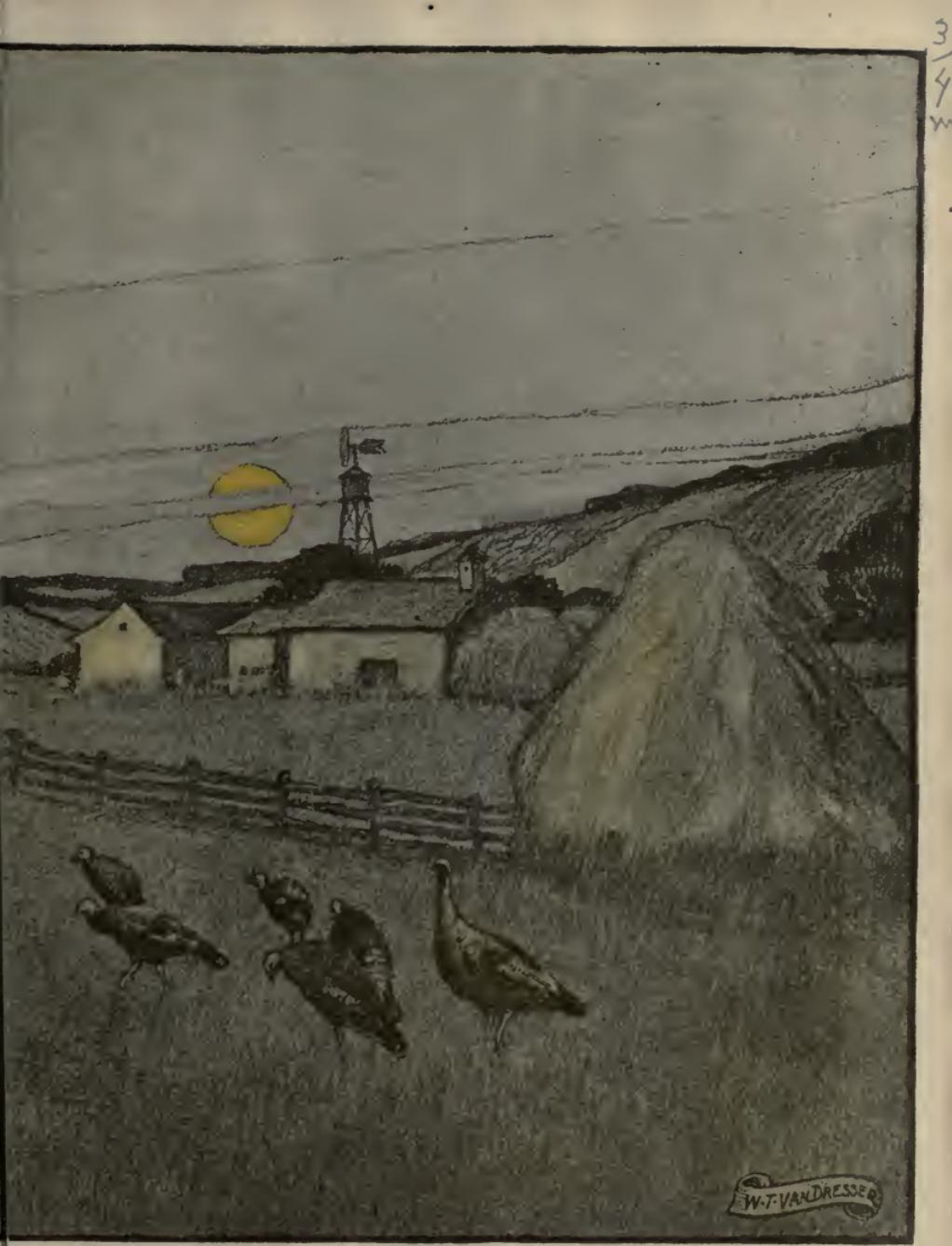


THE · LITTLE · BROWN · HEN · HEARS
THE · SONG · OF · THE · NIGHTINGALE ·

By Jasmine Stone Van Dresser



AND - WITH - THE - LENGTH -
ENING - EVENING - SHADOWS -



W.T. VANDRESSER

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William
T. Van
Dresser

The Little Brown Hen Hears the Song of the Nightingale & The Golden Harvest

By Jasmine Stone Van Dresser
Author of "How to Find Happyland"
With an Introduction by Margaret Beecher White
The Illustrations by William T. Van Dresser



THE LOUDEST TALKERS ARE NOT ALWAYS WISEST

Paul Elder and Company
San Francisco and New York

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TO
WILLIAM T. VAN DRESSER
BUT FOR WHOM THE STORIES
WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN WRITTEN
THIS LITTLE BOOK IS LOVINGLY
DEDICATED BY THE
AUTHOR

FOREWORD.

It is the duty of all good, useful stories to give a message to their readers. The two dainty stories contained in this little volume each carries its message of truth. Pure, simple and wholesome in quality, they cannot fail to refresh as well as instruct those who receive them.

In the *Golden Harvest* the lesson of patience taught by the little apple tree's experience will bear rich fruit I do not doubt, and the wisdom of the little brown hen cannot help but teach us all to listen for the nightingale's song of harmony in our own lives.

MARGARET BEECHER WHITE.

The Little Brown Hen Hears the Song of the Nightingale



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A POMPOUS old gander who lived in a barn-yard thought himself wiser than the rest of the creatures, and so decided to instruct them.

He called together all the fowls in the barn-yard, and the pigeons off the barn-roof, and told them to listen to him.

They gathered around and listened very earnestly, for they thought they would learn a great deal of wisdom.

"The first thing for you to learn," said the gander, "is to speak my language. It is very silly for you to chatter as you do. Now we will all say, 'honk!' one, two, three,—'honk!'"

The creatures all tried very hard to say "honk!" but the sounds they made were so remarkable that I cannot write them, and none of them sounded like "honk!"

The gander was very angry.

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“How stupid you are!” he cried. “Now you all must practise till you learn it. Do not let me hear a peep or cluck or a coo! You must all ‘honk’ when you have anything to say.”

So they obediently tried to do as he said.

When the little brown hen laid an egg, instead of making the fact known with her sharp little “cut — cut — cut — cut-ah-cut!” as a well-ordered hen should do, she ran around the barn-yard trying to say, “honk! honk!”

But nobody heard her, and nobody came to look for the egg.

The guinea-fowls way down in the pasture ceased calling “la croik! la croik!” and there was no way of finding where they had hid their nests. In the afternoon, when their shrill cries should have warned the farmers that it was going to rain, they were still

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honking, or trying to, so the nicely dried hay got wet.

Next morning chanticleer, instead of rousing the place with his lusty crow, made an effort at honking that could not be heard a stone's throw away, and so the whole farm overslept.

All day there was a Babel of sounds in the barn-yard. The turkeys left off gobbling and made a queer sound that they thought was "honk!" the ducks left off quacking, the chicks left off peeping, and said nothing at all, for "honk!" was too big a mouthful for them; and the soft billing and cooing of the doves were turned into an ugly harsh sound.

Things were indeed getting into a dreadful state, and they grew worse, instead of better.

The hens forgot to lay eggs, the doves became proud and pompous like

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the gander, and as for the turkey gobblers, they kept the place in an uproar, for they thought they could really honk! and they never ceased from morning till night.

There's no telling what it all would have come to if there hadn't been one in the barn-yard, with an ear that could hear something besides the dreadful discords.

One night the little brown hen was roosting alone in the top of the hen-house. All at once she was awakened by the sweetest song she had ever heard.

She called to her chicks and to some of her companions to wake up and listen; but they were sleepy and soon dozed off again, so the little brown hen was left listening alone.

"I will ask the gander what this beautiful song means," she said. "He knows everything."



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So she awoke the gander and asked him who was singing the beautiful song, and what it meant.

The gander said gruffly: "It is the nightingale. I do not know what her song means. She should learn to honk!" And he tucked his head back under his wing.

"Ah!" thought the little brown hen, "if learning the gander's language does not help me to understand this beautiful song, I do not think it is worth bothering with. I shall never try to say 'honk!' again."

So she went back to her roost and listened till the nightingale's song ceased. Then she tucked her head under her little brown wing and went to sleep, her little heart singing within her.

At daylight she awoke, and hopping down sought her companions, eager to



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tell them the wonderful thing that was singing in her heart.

"This is a beautiful, simple world," she cried, "and I have learned a very wonderful thing!"

But to her surprise, the creatures had no desire to hear what it was, for they were all in a flurry getting ready for their next lesson in honking.

"Indeed, you need not bother about honking," cried the little brown hen, but nobody paid any attention to her.

So she called her chicks about her, and went her way, clucking merrily, while they picked up bugs, and dared to peep once more when they found a nice fat worm.

Meanwhile the class in honking made very little headway, for no sooner were they settled than they began to wish they knew what wonderful thing the little brown hen had to tell.



THEY GATHERED AROUND AND
LISTENED VERY ERNESTLY

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They craned their necks to watch her, and were filled with envy, seeing that she and her chicks feasted bountifully, with very little scratching, whereas *they* scratched in the barn-yard all day, and found only enough bugs to quarrel over.

"Indeed!" said one old rooster, "we have learned nothing about the best way of scratching for bugs, with all our gabbling."

"I should be glad," spoke up a duck, "to learn the wonderful thing that the little hen has learned, so *I* could keep from quarreling with my neighbors."

They all grew quite uneasy, and the gander became very angry.

"Such a stupid lot I have never seen!" he cried. "I have a great mind to let you go your ways and not bother with you!" and thereat he dismissed the class in high dudgeon.

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The first thing they all did was to take after the little brown hen.

"What is the wonderful thing you have learned?" asked the gobblers, shaking their red throats and looking very important.

"Oh!" said the wise little hen, "I learned it by listening to the nightingale, and so can you, I presume, if you leave off that silly honking. Just gobble as nicely as you can when you have anything to say, but first be sure it is worth saying."

The turkeys wished the little brown hen would tell them and save them the trouble of listening, but as they had paid no attention when she offered, they had nothing to do but follow her advice.

So they stopped honking and did very little gobbling, for they found that they had not much of importance to say.

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The ducks and the chickens and the doves all asked the same question, and the little brown hen gave them much the same answer :

"Just quack and coo and cluck as nicely as you can, and have a care to lay nice eggs. Attend very strictly to your own affairs, for I have found that one learns a great deal by listening."

As they all took her advice, the barn-yard became a quiet, well-ordered barn-yard again, with only so much cackling and clucking, and so forth, as to give it a business-like air.

For each one was listening to hear when the nightingale came, and first thing they knew each one heard the same song as the little brown hen, for it was singing in all their hearts, and they understood it, whether they quacked or gobbled or cooed.

"It does seem that there's a deal of

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talking these days," said the little brown hen, "and it's mighty hard to listen; but even if the old gander does honk every now and then, nobody need pay any attention to him, for, after all, it isn't always those with the loudest voices that have the best things to say."

The Little Apple Tree Bears a Golden Harvest



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IN A thriving apple orchard full of trees richly laden with fruit, stood one hardy little tree whose apples remained small and green and hard.

The little tree wondered why her fruit was so small, when that on the other trees grew so large and fine.

"But perhaps as these are my first apples they are slow in ripening," she thought. "I must be patient and before long the beautiful color will begin to appear."

So day after day she watched for some signs of color on the cheeks of the hard little apples, and time seemed to drag more and more slowly.

But life in an apple orchard is not altogether uneventful, and the little tree became interested in finding she could take part in what was going on about her.

One day there was a curious squawk

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in among her branches, and soon two robins, each with a worm in his mouth, came flying in through the thick-leaved boughs, to their nest in a crotch of the tree.

“Our birdies are hatched!” they cried, filling the gaping mouths. “The little tree sheltered our eggs from storm and sun, and hid them so carefully that no one could find them. We are safer in this tree than in any tree in the orchard.”

The little tree was filled with joy at finding that, after all, there was something she could do to be of use.

“I have watched the little blue eggs ever since you left them here,” she said; and she seemed to snuggle her branches more closely about the nest.

At last the little robins grew strong enough to fly, and the nest was left empty, though the young birds stayed

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in the orchard and often came to perch in the tree, and sing their song of gratitude.

Indeed all the creatures about seemed to know that here was loving shelter for them. A little chipmunk made its home under the rock at the foot of the tree, and frisked up the trunk and among the boughs. Many birds perched in the branches and told wonderful song stories of what was going on in the world.

A merry little flycatcher chose a small twig under one of the boughs of the apple tree, where it perched for hours, darting out when a fly or other insect buzzed by; but always returning to the little twig as if it were home. In the shade of the thick-leaved boughs, the friendly cows sought shelter, patiently chewing their cud, and switching their tails to shoo off the flies.

And so the earnest little tree did all

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she could to be of use, and was more beloved, though she did not know it, than any tree in the orchard. Yet she could not but think sadly of her little green apples, that seemed to show no signs of ripening.

Many long summer days passed. The early harvest apples in their full prime were picked and barreled.

Each day the golden pippins grew more juicy and golden; the big jolly Ben Davis, wine-saps, northern spies, bellflowers and many others ripening in their turn, filled the orchard with a delightful odor and glow of color; but the fruit on the one tree seemed as hard and backward as ever.

The trees with the beautiful fruit laughed and whispered among themselves, and the little tree was very unhappy, for she thought they were laughing at her.

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"Surely my fruit *must* begin to ripen soon," she thought.

But at night when the rest of the orchard was asleep, she wept silently to herself, for she wondered if it could be possible that her apples would not ripen at all.

At last summer seemed to hold her breath. Day after day the warm sunshine beat down upon the orchard, drowsy with the richness and fulness of its almost completed labor. The trees now and then stirred their heavy branches, as if suggesting that it was time to be relieved of their burden.

One day a flock of merry children came to the orchard to play. The day was cool, a gentle breeze stirred,—early fall had blown its first faint breath.

The children frolicked all day, ate their luncheon on the grass, shook down ripe apples, and with the lengthening

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evening shadows, began to gather up their baskets, happy and contented and ready to go home.

A cool evening breeze sprang up with sudden briskness.

“Look at that black cloud!” cried a little urchin.

Suddenly the rain began to come down with a brisk patter; the children scampered quickly under the nearest tree; the dark cloud overspread the whole sky, rain pelted down, a great wind roared through the orchard, bending the trees, and causing their branches to wave wildly and a shower of apples to fall.

“Oh, where shall we go?” cried the children. “The apples are pelting us, and the rain drives in upon us.”

“Yonder under the little tree with green apples,” cried one. “See how thickly leaved it is, and how low the



THE · WARM · SUNSHINE · BEAT · DOWN ·
UPON · THE · DROWSY · ORCHARD · · · · ·

W. H. DAWSON

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boughs bend; we shall be well sheltered there."

Quickly they rushed to the tree, and how gladly she gathered them in, and kept them dry under her loving arms; and not one of her apples fell off.

Soon the shower was over, and the children scampered home, saying:

"It's a good thing we were near that tree, or we should have been soaking wet. There isn't another one like it in the orchard."

The little tree heard their words of gratitude, and wept for joy.

The next day was bright and warm, and pleasant sunshiny weather followed. At last the haze of Indian summer settled lovingly over the country and the orchard rang with the voices of men and boys carrying baskets and ladders.

"Too bad that equinoctial storm was such a blusterer," said one of the

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men. "These lazy trees have dropped much of their fruit, and it lies bruised on the ground."

But they picked barrel after barrel of the rich harvest, and soon the little tree was left alone with her burden of useless fruit.

Now the trees seemed prouder than ever, and talked boastfully about the fine apple harvest *they* had furnished for mankind.

The little tree sighed softly to herself. "But I must not be unhappy," she said, "for if I cannot bear beautiful red and golden apples, there is surely some work for me to do, and I shall find out what it is."

And now, though the little tree had not noticed that her apples had grown, her branches were bending almost to the ground with their weight. She tried to shake off some of the apples,

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for it seemed to add to her disgrace to bear so much of this useless fruit. But she could no more shake them off than could the wind and storm.

The clear cool fall days were passing, growing shorter and shorter. The little tree was very lonely now, for the chipmunk was snug in his winter home, the birds had flown south and the cows now looked for sun instead of shade. The other trees, having finished their work, were preparing for their long winter nap. The little tree way down in the corner of the orchard seldom saw any one, but she was stout of heart, and kept on saying:

“I know I shall find some way to be of use.”

She did not pay much attention to her apples, for she had long ago given up hopes of their becoming red and ripe.

Every night now white frost tripped

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daintily over the hardening ground, and at sunup disappeared; the days were cool and bright; the frosts grew heavier and the weather colder.

One day there were voices in the orchard,—men and boys carrying baskets and ladders were coming; and to the astonishment of the little tree, they stopped under her boughs, placed the ladders in the branches and climbed up.

“Good old apples!” cried one of the boys, dropping them into his basket with a plump.

“A fine yield!” said one of the men. “Did you ever see anything more beautiful than this rich golden brown?”

“The sweetest apple that ever grew!” said another. “I don’t feel that I’ve had an apple till November brings these.”

“It’s a wise Providence that saves this sweetest morsel for the last,” declared a third.

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The little tree listened, trembling with happiness. Could it be true?

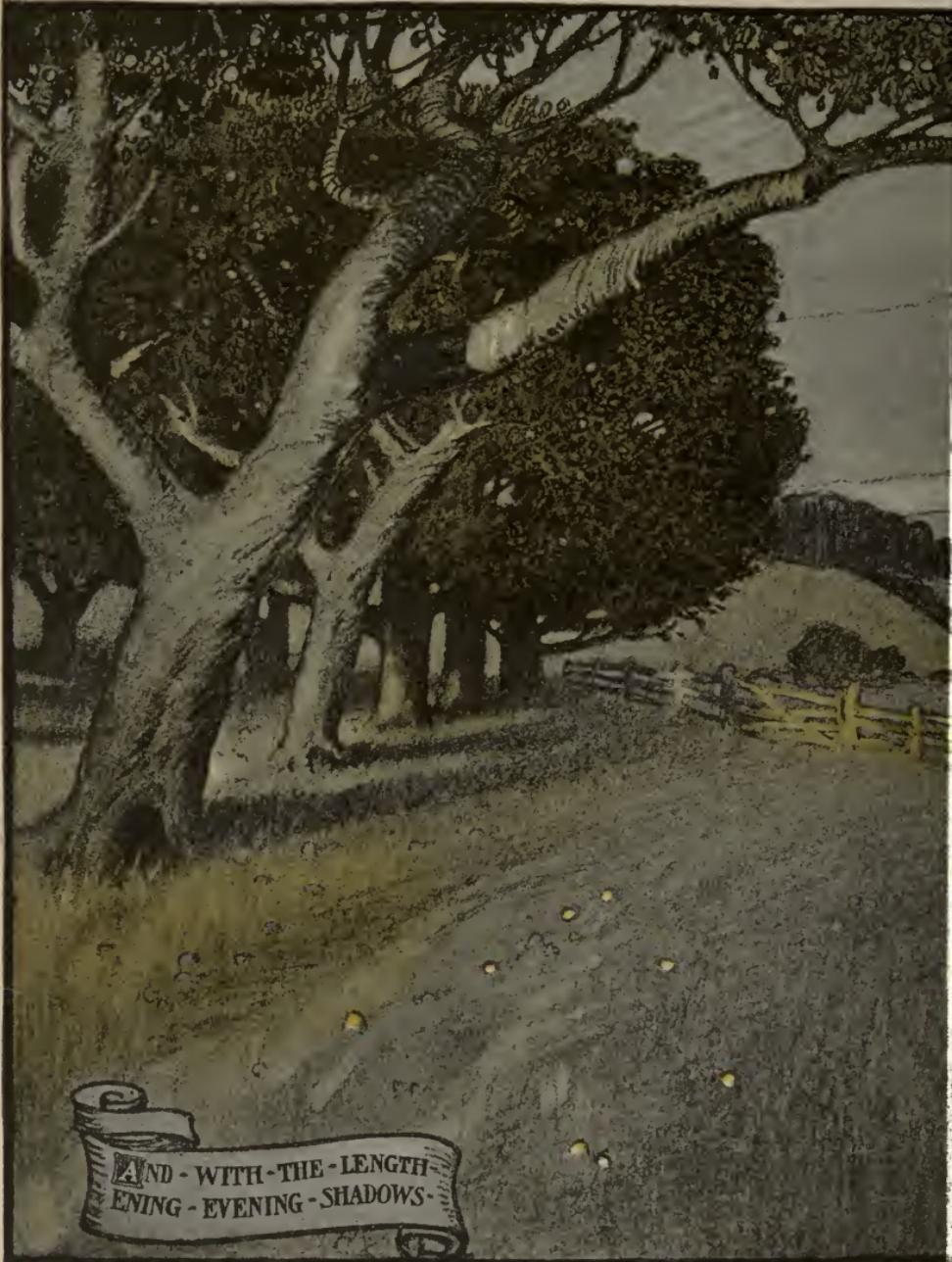
She gazed at the fruit on her heavy branches, and there, like drops of gold, tinged with the sombre violet of November, hung ball after ball of the luscious sweetness.

"Oh!" she murmured, "how blest I am to have so much to give, when all the rest of nature is silent and sleeping. How happy I shall be, and how earnestly I will try to bear the sweetest apples ever grown!"

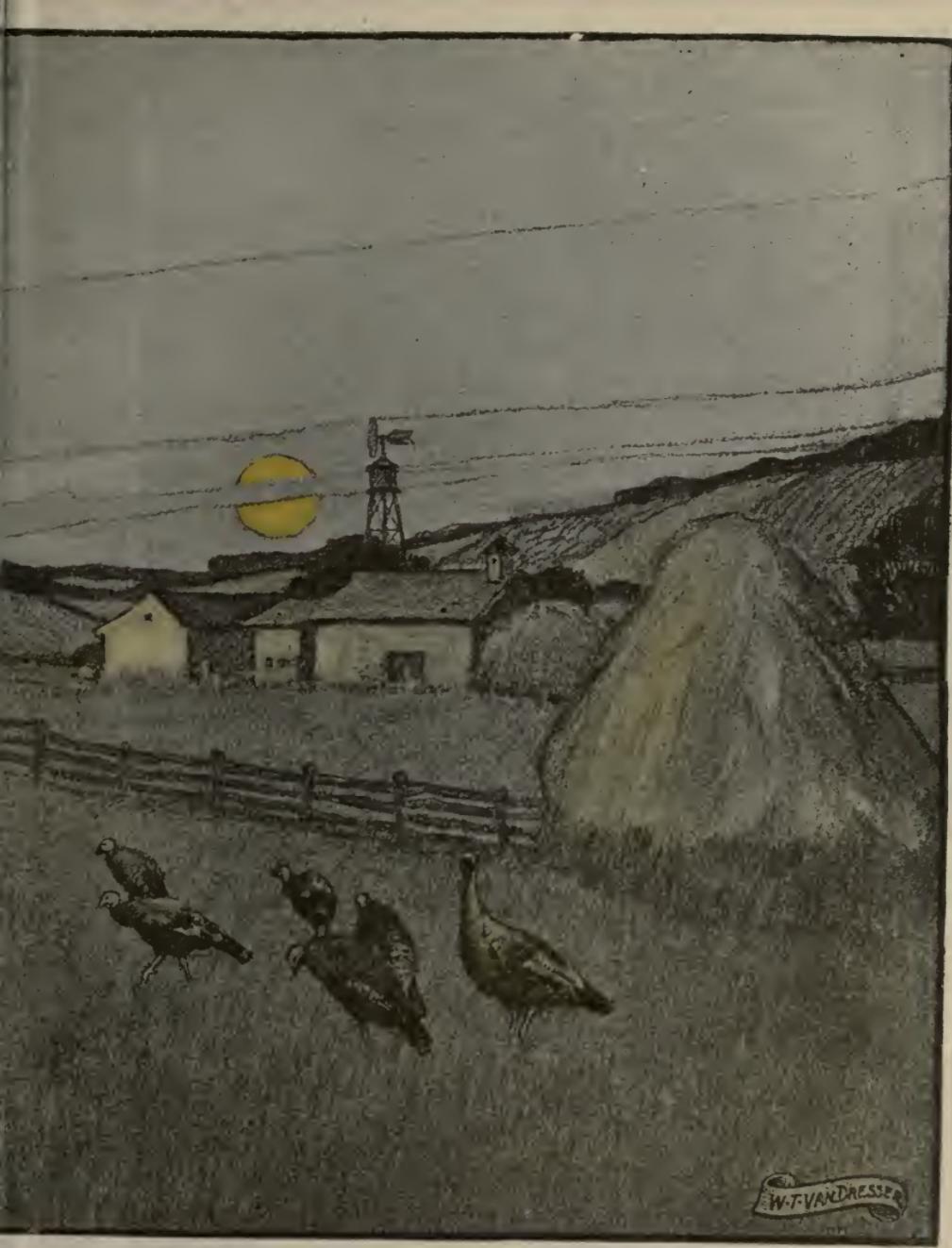
At last the apples were all picked and carried to the great bins in the cellar, there to lie mellowing and sweetening for the farmer's use during the long winter months.

And the little russet apple tree went to sleep, and took her long nap with the rest.

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